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Forests for people, livelihoods and poverty eradication

Letter dated 11 January 2010 from the Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the Co-Chairs' summary report of the international expert meeting on forests for people: the role of national forest programmes and the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests, which was held in Guilin, China, from 17 to 20 November 2009 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the ninth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests.

(*Signed*) **Zhang** Yesui
Ambassador and Permanent Representative

* E/CN.18/2011/1.

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Annex to the letter dated 11 January 2010 from the Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

International expert meeting on forests for people: the role of national forest programmes and the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests

A country-led initiative by the People's Republic of China in support of the United Nations Forum on Forests

Co-Chairs' summary report

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1. Background and context

1. This report summarizes discussions at the international meeting of forest experts which took place in Guilin, China, from 17 to 20 November 2009 as a country-led initiative in support of the United Nations Forum on Forests on the subject of "forests for people: the role of national forest programmes and the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests". This summary report is a compilation of views expressed during the meeting and does not necessarily reflect a consensus among the experts who participated in their personal capacity. The full proceedings of the meeting will be posted on the website at www.apfnet.cn/cli.

2. The country-led initiative was hosted by the People's Republic of China, in collaboration with the Governments of Austria, Finland, Germany and the United States of America, and with substantive assistance of the United Nations Forum on Forests secretariat, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Technical support was provided by the Asia-Pacific Network for Sustainable Forest Management and Rehabilitation (APFNet), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the National Forest Programme Facility, the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the Nature Conservancy.

3. The aim of the expert meeting was to share experiences and lessons learned in the use of national forest programmes to achieve sustainable forest management and as a means to implement the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests (the forest instruments) to enhance the contribution of forests to people's well-being. To that end, experts from around the world identified challenges and opportunities associated with forests for people, national forest programmes and the forest instrument in the context of:

- Policy, legal and institutional frameworks
- Sustainable production of goods and services
- National arrangements to mobilize financing
- Capacity-building and participatory approaches.

4. The meeting was attended by 150 experts from 41 countries, from Governments, multilateral and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the private sector and other major groups identified in Agenda 21. A steering committee guided daily preparations and operations. Members consisted of officials from the Governments of Austria, China, Finland, Germany, Ghana, Guatemala, and the United States of America, in addition to representatives from the United Nations Forum on Forests secretariat, FAO, the National Forest Programme Facility, the Nature Conservancy and APFNet.

5. The meeting was officially opened by Mr. Qu Guilin, Director General of the State Forestry Administration of China. Welcome addresses were delivered by Ms. Yin Hong, Vice Minister of the State Forestry Administration; Mr. Ingwald Gschwandtl, Director of Forest Policy and Forest Information, Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Environment and Water Management, Austria; Mr. Heikki Granholm, Director, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Finland; Mr. Richard Lammel, Head of Forestry, German Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection; Ms. Catherine Karr-Colque, Foreign Affairs Officer of the United States

Department of State; Ms. Jan McAlpine, Director of the United Nations Forum on Forests secretariat; Mr. Jerker Thunberg, Manager of the National Forest Programme Facility; Mr. Li Mingqi, Deputy Director-General from Guangxi Department of Forestry, China; and Mr. Huang Junhua, Vice-Mayor of Guilin. Mr. Thomas Stelzer, Assistant Secretary-General, Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, attended and addressed the meeting, emphasizing the significance of the issues being discussed with the current global food, financial and climate change crises.

6. Special addresses were given by Mr. Felix Finkbeiner of Plant for the Planet Student Initiative and Ms. Wei Wei, famous Chinese singer and environmental advocate.

7. The meeting was co-chaired by Mr. Qu Guilin of China and Mr. Ingwald Gschwandtl of Austria.

8. Four working groups were established, each moderated by professional facilitators (Ms. Evy von Pfeil, Mr. Bernd Markus Liss, Mr. Chun Lai and Ms. Rowena Soriaga). Rapporteurs were assigned to capture main discussion points (Mr. Matthias Schwoerer (Germany), Ms. Marilyn Headley (Jamaica), Mr. Oppon Sasu (Ghana) and Mr. Alisher Shukorov (Uzbekistan)).

9. A number of presentations were made in plenary to highlight issues and set the stage for discussions which followed in working groups (see appendix for the list of presenters and presentations). These groups met three times over the duration of the meeting and presented summaries to the plenary after each session so that participants could take note of key points raised in all groups. Guidance provided for working group discussions was as follows:

- Identification and exploration of issues related to forests for people, national forest programmes and the forest instrument
- Achievements, shortcomings, the role of national forest programmes and the forest instrument, the role of international/regional support, the private sector and NGOs
- Conclusions and recommendations.

10. Participants expressed their warm gratitude to the organizers and hosts of the meeting in Guilin. They also deeply appreciated the opportunity which the People's Republic of China provided them to explore in greater detail the issues related to the theme "forests for people, livelihoods and poverty eradication" in order to better inform discussions at the ninth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests. Special appreciation was also expressed to Mr. Lu De and Ms. Rosalie McConnell for their outstanding support to the meeting.

11. Participants requested that the outcome of this country-led initiative be transmitted to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and that this report be translated into all official languages and be made available as an official document for consideration at the ninth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests. Organizers urged participants also to communicate the results to their countries and organizations.

2. Conclusions and recommendations

2.1 General conclusions and recommendations

12. This section reflects conclusions and recommendations of an overarching nature which were noted by more than one working group.

13. In order to make forestry more people oriented, countries should:

- Design policy and legal frameworks that support forests for people
- Recognize and raise awareness of the importance of forests and the forest sector to national sustainable development
- Create an enabling environment, including good governance, investment and incentives for forests for people, including development of small and medium enterprises
- Understand and capture the full range of forest values
- Emphasize national forest programmes as ongoing processes which respond to emerging issues, including mitigation of and adaptation to climate change
- Achieve a more effective cross-sectoral integration
- Ensure benefits reach indigenous and local communities
- Establish clear land and resource tenure and responsibilities
- Engage stakeholders more effectively in decision-making and implementation
- Enhance the capacity of countries and people to manage their resources sustainably, including through education, training, research and extension
- Utilize the forest instrument to guide national forest programmes to strengthen priorities, including the need to mobilize financing
- Acknowledge that national forest programme processes, to be successful and to contribute to poverty reduction, require public institutions to assume a facilitative role, secure tenure arrangements, meaningful stakeholder participation, and support to enterprise development.

14. Participants also stressed the need to strengthen international support mechanisms to facilitate implementation of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests and financing for sustainable forest management. In addition, they noted the need to recognize the different characteristics and situations of countries, mainly regarding financing for sustainable forest management, and emphasized that developing countries require substantial financial support to implement national forest programmes and the forest instrument.

2.2 Policy, legal and institutional framework

Conclusions

15. The expert meeting came to the following conclusions:

- Despite a number of success cases, national forest programmes and similar processes are not sufficiently integrated into broader policies and are not yet

collaborating across sectors to the extent desirable. They are also often seen as projects rather than iterative and long-term processes

- Political commitment is essential to make forest policy more people-oriented
- A holistic approach to forests that takes into account the economic, social and environmental values as well as the cultural and spiritual dimensions of forests to all people is essential, including for emerging policies like reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD/REDD-plus)
- A policy platform that offers equitable participation would ensure that all stakeholder interests are reflected
- International and regional cooperation should support national policy and institutional frameworks that promote "forests for people" through information sharing, partnership building, technology transfer, financing, capacity development, policy dialogue and common frameworks such as the forest instrument
- The forest instrument provides a comprehensive framework for national action and international cooperation for sustainable forest management, including "forests for people", and should be fully utilized. National policies and measures identified in the forest instrument can be used as a good reference for the development and implementation of national forest programmes and the identification of capacity needs.

Recommendations

16. The policy and legal framework should:

- Promote horizontal and vertical communication
- Provide for secure rights, including rights over resources, and clearly identify responsibilities
- Ensure a transparent and participatory process of policy development and implementation, including providing early and adequate information, for example translation of documents into local languages
- Promote national forest programmes as processes with a dynamic and evolving nature, rather than static planning concepts
- Support sustainable, forest-based livelihoods, in particular for forest-dependent populations
- Take into account the multiple values of forests
- Ensure that adequate forest-related data is available
- Provide for periodic review of forest-related policies, national forest programmes and similar programmes, with a view to assessing impacts on local populations and responding to new and emerging challenges
- Promote coordination of forest-related policies, strategies and programmes.

17. Forestry institutions should put greater emphasis on their facilitating role in supporting "forests for people" and foster multi-stakeholder participation. They should also:

- Strengthen their own capacities to respond to new and emerging challenges, including conflict resolution
- Establish feedback mechanisms on lessons learned
- Strengthen capacities for enforcement of forest-related laws and regulations
- Share and widely disseminate data and information.

18. In order to foster cross-sectoral coordination, forestry institutions should:

- Analyse the interaction with other sectors
- Identify mutual interests
- Create win-win situations
- Establish appropriate inter-agency mechanisms at different levels
- Involve relevant sectors early in policy design.

2.3 Sustainable production of goods and services

Conclusions

19. Secure long-term land tenure rights to local forest users provide incentives for sustainable production of goods and services. Moreover, incentives to ensure adequate conditions for sufficient return from sustainable forest management are essential.

20. If tenure and property rights are not clear, if traditional practices for conservation and sustainable use are not well known or applied, and if stakeholders are not aware of each other's roles, it is difficult to sustainably produce goods and services.

21. If stakeholders had adequate information on the resources, harvesting levels could be more sustainable and the socio-economic values could be better appreciated.

22. The sustainable production of goods and services will benefit from the analysis of the full value chain and demand-side factors.

Recommendations

23. Policies and regulations should ensure that land tenure rights are diversified, well defined and defended.

24. Appropriate financial incentives, market-based instruments and access to relevant markets should be promoted.

25. The capacity to sustainably produce goods and services, particularly the capacity of local populations, should be improved through such means as community-based training, education networks and associations comprised of representatives from relevant stakeholder groups.

26. Awareness should be raised of the value and importance of sustainable production of multiple forest goods and services, for example through information campaigns targeted at communities, as well as of forestry's contribution in terms of social, environmental and economic benefits.

27. The understanding of community groups of their rights and responsibilities with regard to sustainable forest management should be increased.

28. Opportunities should be provided for key stakeholders (e.g., small producers) to learn about sustainable harvesting levels, negotiation skills, market trends and access to markets.

29. Local entrepreneurship and small and medium forest-based enterprises and related investment should be promoted for the purpose of sustainable forest management.

2.4 National and international arrangements to mobilize financing

Conclusions

30. Resources are scarce or insufficient. However, many funding sources are available but not easily accessible.

31. The use of new financing and investment is most efficient when combined with efforts to build capacity. Lack of capacity or weak capacity to establish priorities or manage projects can do more harm than good.

32. The potential of national forest programmes to come up with ways to finance is not fully used, and they can be an important means to reach decision makers and to lobby for additional funding.

33. Governments have an important role in creating an enabling environment for investment.

34. Full values of forest goods and services are not sufficiently recognized, and the sector's contribution to the gross national product is not sufficiently reflected, partly because data related to the informal sector are not captured.

35. The issue of financing is key for the implementation of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests proposals for action and the forest instrument.

36. International support (capacities, technologies, funding) is essential for developing countries, including for the implementation of the forest instrument.

Recommendations

37. Countries should:

- Increase financing as part of a comprehensive plan to develop capacity of all kinds
- Make capacity-building an integral part of all strategies designed to mobilize and use new financing, including at the community level
- Mobilize funding from all sources, including existing resources (e.g., revenues, taxes), and use information about existing funds more effectively
- Use the forest instrument and national forest programmes to establish national forest financing strategies
- Balance resource needs for different types of forests and areas within the country to address underfunding

- Develop funding mechanisms that are specific for different purposes and different forest types
- Use national forest programme processes for dialogue with financing institutions (for example, banks and insurance companies)
- Identify best practices for financing arrangements for wider application
- Highlight the role of forests for people and poverty alleviation
- Recruit prominent people to champion the importance of forests and involve media to attract the attention of decision makers to improve funding for the forest sector
- Identify innovative financing mechanisms (for example, SMS for forest financing) and ways to use payment environmental services (PES)
- Review policies, legislation and management systems
- Establish transparent and clear benefit sharing mechanisms to ensure that benefits reach local communities to improve their livelihoods
- Link forests to the discussion on climate change and financing options deriving therefrom
- Conduct cost/benefit analyses of various forest management practices as a basis for financing sustainable forest management
- Continue their important work on financing for sustainable forest management and means of implementation within the United Nations Forum on Forests and develop concrete solutions on means of implementation (finance, knowledge, technology transfer) and further explore the possibility of a global forest fund
- Strengthen international support mechanisms to facilitate implementation of the forest instrument and financing for sustainable forest management.

2.5 Capacity-building and participatory approaches

Conclusions

38. The expert meeting's conclusions are as follows:

- The development and implementation of national forest programmes require capacity-building. However, national forest programme processes also build the capacity of stakeholders in areas where they are operational
- A good participatory approach will lead to a more efficient national forest programme
- In order for successful capacity-building to take place and for national forest programmes to be effective, stakeholders must be motivated to learn and change
- Participatory processes face difficulties when the forest sector is reluctant or concerned about sharing power related to the management of resources
- The absence of good information and data makes it difficult for NGOs to participate effectively in decision-making and can undermine the long-term success of national forest programmes

- Weak capacity for valuation of forest goods and services is a barrier which prevents more efficient use of PES schemes.

Recommendations

39. The recommendations are as follows:

- Ensure the involvement of all stakeholders during the elaboration and review national forest programme processes
- Identify suitable approaches to facilitate the elaboration and review of national forest programme processes and their coherence with the forest instrument
- Develop and widely disseminate information to better understand the forest instrument and its links to national forest programme processes
- Invite the United Nations Forum on Forests and FAO to streamline requests for voluntary reporting on the forest instrument and national forest programmes in order to reduce the reporting burden on countries
- Because capacities need to be built to understand and undertake a national forest programme process, an evaluation should be undertaken prior to starting one (or as a monitoring tool for those countries with a national forest programme in place). The evaluation should be a consultative process and should take into consideration, inter alia:
  - Whether adequate capacity exists to engage stakeholders in a transparent, open and inclusive way, including for the management of conflicts
  - The need for cross-sectoral coordination
  - The extent to which there is an interface between science and policy
  - Whether enabling conditions exist to address tenure issues, including legislation
  - The degree of political will to implement the national forest programme
- Establish a mechanism to collect and disseminate information on best practices related to the development and implementation of national forest programme processes
- Establish mechanisms to exchange information and promote technology transfer at national and international levels
- In addition to traditional capacity-building mechanisms (seminars, workshops, web forums), thought should be given to:
  - Piloting certain aspects of the national forest programme to learn lessons prior to implementing it on a large scale
  - Increasing exchange programmes on national forest programmes among countries
  - Building understanding and knowledge of indigenous peoples and forest-dependent communities concerning their rights, especially in regard to multilateral environmental agreements to which their country is a signatory

- Finding ways to better utilize the wealth of printed material in existence on sustainable forest management topics

- Increase understanding of how other sectors impact forests and determine the extent to which national forest programmes need to be revised to anticipate/address these factors

- Improve skills for communication, moderation, facilitation, conflict management and negotiation, in particular to strengthen collaboration with other sectors

- Improve capacity for valuation of forest goods and services to use PES schemes more efficiently

- Support the National Forest Programme Facility (FAO) in nurturing national forest programme processes.

Appendix

List of presenters and titles of presentations

Mr. Mahendra Joshi, Senior Programme Officer, United Nations Forum on Forests secretariat

Forests for people in the context of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests, national forest programmes and the United Nations Forum on Forests

Ms. Stephanie Caswell, International Consultant

Global and regional activities or measures to promote forests for people, contributing to implementation of national forest programmes and the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests

Mr. Jerker Thunberg, Manager, National Forest Programme Facility

National forest programmes as a tool to facilitate stakeholder participation in promoting forests for people and implementing the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests

Ms. Dai Guangcui, Deputy Director General, Forestry Economic Development Research Centre, State Forestry Administration, China

Forestry development and reform in China

Mr. Ogden Rodas Camas, Coordinator, National Forest Programme, Guatemala

The National Forest Programme in Guatemala and links with the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests

Ms. Marja Kokkonen, Secretary-General, National Forest Programme, Finland

Finland's National Forest Programme 2015

Mr. David Kpelle, National Project Coordinator of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests, Ghana

Ghana's experience in the implementation of the national forest programme and the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests

Ms. Abidah Billah Setyowati, Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture and Natural Resources

Empowered women and the men behind them: an innovation for gender equality in forestry in Nepal

Mr. Hubertus Samangun, Ikatan Cendekiawan Tanimbar, Indonesia

Experiences and lessons learned in implementing national forest programmes and the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests to improve livelihoods and eradicate poverty from the perspective of the indigenous peoples major group

Mr. Michael Watson, the Institute of Cultural Affairs International

Forests for people: issues and opportunities in implementing national forest programmes and the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests to improve livelihoods and eradicate poverty from the perspectives of NGOs

Mr. Peter deMarsh, International Family Forest Alliance

Family and community forestry: local control for better sustainability

Ms. Yasemin Öztürk, International Forestry Student Association

Experiences and lessons learned in implementing national forest programmes and the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests to improve livelihoods and eradicate poverty from the perspective of the children and youth major group

Ms. Eva Muller, Chief of Forest Policy Service, FAO

FAO support to people and forests

Mr. Dirk Gaul, Forestry Specialist, Global Environment Facility

Sustainable forest management at the Global Environment Facility

Mr. Takeichi Ishikawa, Assistant Director, International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO)

Actions of ITTO to support implementation of national forest programmes and the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests, focusing on forests for people, livelihoods and poverty eradication

Mr. Liu Shirong, Chinese Academy of Forestry and Board Member of the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO)

Contribution of science to national forest programmes

Special addresses

Mr. Thomas Stelzer, Assistant Secretary-General, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations

Mr. Felix Finkbeiner, Plant for the Planet Student Initiative

Ms. Wei Wei, Environmental advocate and famous Chinese singer